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December 12, 1967

Mr. Tom Bethell
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Dear Tom,

This is in reply to your letter of December 1, 1967, concerning columnists Robert Allen and Paul Scott, and in particular their recent column about Oswald's knowledge of the transfer of Eusebio Azque from the Cuban Consulate in Mexico City.

I know very little about Allen & Scott in general. I think of them as a somewhat right-wing equivalent of Drew Pearson & Jack Anderson -- and about as unlikely to be factually accurate. As the rest of this letter should indicate, I do not believe that they have done any thorough research on the assassination on their own. I would guess that they have sources who provide them with interesting documents from the Archives, and that neither the sources nor Allen & Scott are too interested in checking out the 26 volumes, looking for related documents, and the like.

I vaguely recall reading about the anomaly discussed by Allen & Scott somewhere, but I do not know where. Azque is mentioned briefly in Whitewash (p. 274, Dell edition), and the matter is discussed in the Warren Report. I have no idea what FBI report Allen & Scott are referring to; it sounds interesting.

The FBI's alleged conclusion that "there was absolutely no way Oswald could have obtained this information during his September visit to Mexico City, since the secret recall orders from Havana were not transmitted until after he had returned to Dallas" seems implausible, if you accept what the CIA said in that part of their report which was not quoted in the Allen & Scott column: "It was known as early as September 1963 that Azque was to be replaced. His replacement did arrive in September.... we speculate that Silvia Duran or some Soviet official might have mentioned it if Oswald complained about Azque's altercation with him."

I am willing to believe that Allen & Scott got this CIA document (which they describe as a "CIA memorandum to the Commission, now declassified and on file in the National Archives") from the Archives. However, what they quote appears on page 310 of the Warren Report (also CE 3126), with the additional passages I have cited above. The omission of what I feel is a plausible innocent explanation leads me to question both the columnists' intentions and the quality of their research. (Of course, the omission of these passages may have been due to not Allen & Scott but the editors.)

The FBI report concerning the interception of the Oswald letter (discussed in the 3 paragraphs headed "Letter Intercepted" in the Shreveport Times column you sent me) may simply be item 69, listed in CE 834. (Perhaps the Archives could provide a copy of this FBI airtel, if it is now available.) If the FBI's subsequent interest in this matter was as great as Allen & Scott suggest, Hoover's answer to question 28 in CE 833 seems peculiarly uninformative.

An earlier Allen & Scott column which may be of interest, also based on material in the 26 volumes, appeared about a year ago. (Berkeley Gazette, 12/6/66)

It consists primarily of quotes from CE 3106. Allen and Scott do not indicate that these items are in the 26 volumes, attributing them to "a separate commission file designated 'Mr. X's File, No. 3106.'" They noted the extensive deletions, but did not notice -- or at least did not mention (in the version I have) -- that Mr. X's name, the date and names of the participants in the interview, etc. are given in the List of Basic Source Materials. (CD 1378, CD 1443, re Konstantin Petrovich Sergievsky)

While the Warren Commission was meeting, Allen & Scott wrote several columns indicating a source rather familiar with the Commission's work. They gave several details said to be from the original FBI Summary Report (Berk. Gazette, 12/20/63). They also said that the CIA reported that Oswald was accompanied on his Mexico trip "by two women and a man, the latter subsequently flying to Cuba." (The Commission considered this speculation; R 659) (Incidentally, I have some notes by Waggoner Carr, dated 11/26/63, in which he says that he asked an unidentified "Colonel Garrison" to determine who went to Mexico with Oswald. "Several hours later Colonel Garrison made a preliminary report stating that two blonde women and another man either went from Texas into Mexico with Oswald or came back with him and they would make a more complete report later." I guess that this Colonel Garrison is from the Texas state police or maybe the CIA; do you happen to know?)

Another Allen & Scott column (2/27/64) claimed that "State Department Cable No. 234, dated Nov. 2, 1959, reports that Oswald was interviewed by the CIA and other embassy officials." This column, referring accurately to the date and number of a cable which, as far as I know, had not yet been made public, may have prompted CD 528, dated 3/18/64. (If this guess is correct, the 2 attachments to that CD are probably the Allen-Scott column and a copy of Dispatch 234.) (Other columns related to the Commission's work appeared on 3/12, 3/30, 4/7, 6/3, 6/16, 7/22, 8/14, and 9/24, 1964 - dates from Berkeley Gazette.)

Another indication that Allen & Scott may have good sources but do not do all that much research is in a column concerning threats against LBJ. (Oakland Tribune, 9/28/66) Robert Webster, who defected to Russia about the same time as Oswald, is mentioned. (He is referred to quite a bit in the 26 volumes; I have prepared a memo on him.) The column says that "one intelligence report notes that Webster could have slipped back into the U.S." There were at least 4 reports in the NY Times about Webster's plans to return and his testimony before the SISS upon his return.

You might be interested in a reference by Allen & Scott to the Crowley affidavit (11H482; Oakland Tribune, 3/3/67). They say it "was turned over to the Warren Commission but never published." Was this about the same time you first noticed this affidavit at the Archives?

Finally, Allen & Scott claimed (Oakland Tribune, 2/24/67) that the Katzenbach CIA probe had taken note of one of the CIA's publication projects: a commercially published subject and name index of people involved in the Commission's work, covering some of the unpublished CD's and working papers. This description does not at all fit Sylvia Meagher's index, the only non-Commission one I know of. There may be nothing at all to this column, but I am confident that if Garrison has what he claims to have, the government has done at least as much research in the Archives as the critics. Such an index certainly would have been prepared by now, at least for official use. If there is any basis for the last paragraphs of the column you sent me, Allen & Scott may be in touch with a government agency which is keeping track of you. (Just a hunch.)

I hope that this information is of use to you.

Sincerely yours,

Paul

Paul L. Hoch